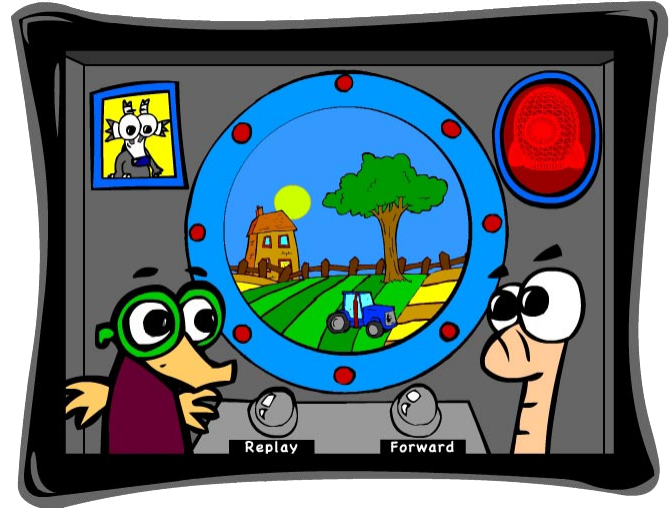




Topic 1: What is Soil?

Soils and the Farm The soil contains the water and nutrients needed to grow plants. Without these nothing would grow. This is true whether the plants are wild or cultivated. Each year farmers cultivate their soils, plant seeds, fertilise the soil and harvest the crops that grow. Farmer's cultivate their soils in order to grow food. This food is used to feed the world's population.

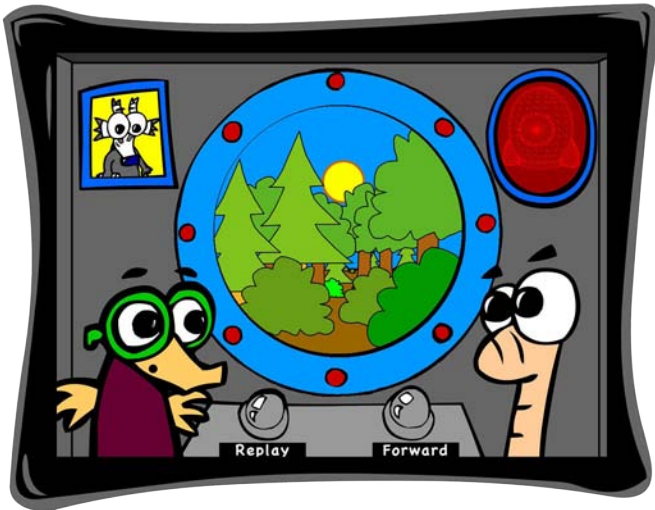


Soils and the Town All the buildings, roads and railways and other parts of the infrastructure in a town are built on or in the soil. Unfortunately when towns are built, the soils within them cannot be used for other important uses, such as growing farmers' crops. Each year we lose a lot of our soils to buildings. In fact the amount of soil lost each year to buildings covers the equivalent area to that of the fairly large town.



Soils and the Garden Soils are extremely important to gardeners because they enable their flowers and vegetables to be grown. Like the farmers, the gardeners needs to look after their soils, keeping them well drained and fertile. If the gardeners look after their soils they can grow beautiful flowers, large onions or beans, and provide the family with healthy vegetables.





Soils in the Woodland Soils play a very important part in our woodlands. They provide anchorage, water and nutrients for the plants that grow in our woodland. Soils have a responsibility for anchoring even our largest trees and stopping them falling over in the winds. Soils provide the water and nutrients for the plants and whether they are acid or not will influence the type of plants that will grow in a particular spot.

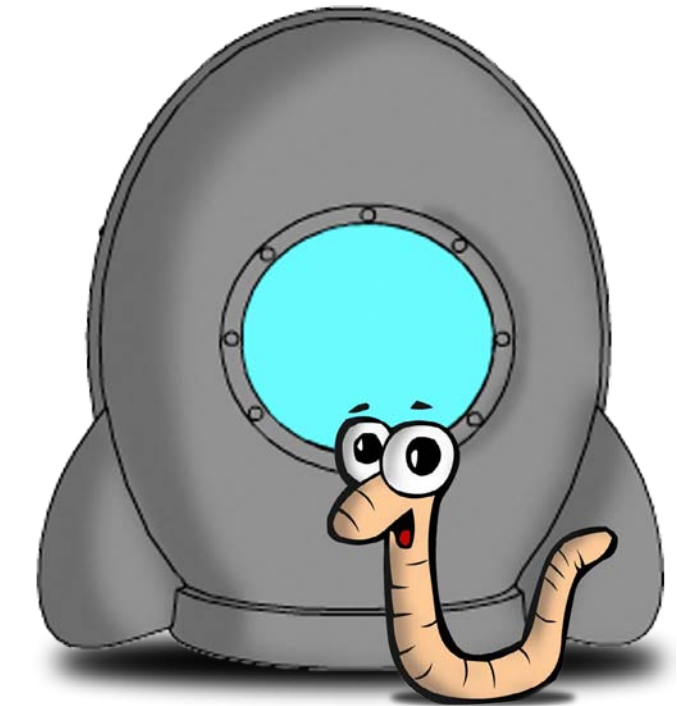


Together with air and water, soil is one of the major natural resources that make the world the wonderful place it is.

Soils form a thin skin over the surface of the earth. Although generally about 1 metre thick, in areas such as the tropics it may be several metres thick, and in the cold arctic areas only a few centimetres thick.

Soils mean different things to people: To the farmer and the gardener, it is what things grow in; to the builder, it is what he needs to put his buildings on; but to the mother whose child is covered in dirt, it is mud.

Soils are the home to millions of organisms which live beneath our feet.



Soils are composed mainly of particles of rock of various sizes. At the top of the soil is usually a darker organic-rich layer which contain many of the nutrients. Soils also store the water for use by plants and animals.

Soils are now under increasing pressure as world population increases rapidly. It is important that we recognise the importance of soils and ensured they are preserved for this and future generations.

